

Going **Green** for the Holidays



Christmas Tree Debate: Many debate whether they should buy an artificial tree or a real tree. Our advice is to buy a real tree. There are several ways to buy a real tree.

- **Living Trees:** They are generally balled and burlapped. While they may be smaller, they can be re-planted outdoors. Try to minimize the time the trees are kept indoors.
- **Cut Trees:** Buy a cut tree from a local tree farm. Make cutting the tree a family trip. Once the holiday season is over, compost it, or make sure it is recycled properly.



Artificial Trees: Artificial trees are made of a petroleum-based plastic, mainly PVC (polyvinyl chloride), and can sometimes contain traces of lead. The PVC makes the trees non-biodegradable, and if it is accidentally burned, it can release harmful products into the air. There have been many issues associated with lead used to preserve the PVC. California has passed a law requiring artificial trees from China to have a warning label identifying the potential lead exposure. If you do buy an artificial tree, read the warning labels carefully, wash your hands after handling it, and keep children away from the floor or carpet under the tree.



Decorating:

- Decorate with **LED lights**. LED lights use less energy than incandescent bulbs. Attach a **timer** to indoor and outdoor lights and program them to only be on for the evening hours when people will see them.
- **Create** your own decorations! String popcorn instead of buying garland, use fresh tree

cuttings to make holiday centerpieces, create ornaments out of old greeting cards and use kitchen spices to make a holiday potpourri. These are great ways to have fun with family and friends as well as lower your environmental impact and expenses during the holidays.



Shopping and Gift Giving:

- Combine shopping trips to reduce the number of trips you make from your house to stores.
- Check any potential gift or holiday product to see if it is either recyclable or made from reused materials. Plus, don't skimp on durability just to get an item at a cheaper price. Products that are more durable will last longer and therefore produce less garbage in the long run.
- Buy **rechargeable batteries**. Nearly 40 percent of all battery sales happen during the holidays. Rechargeable batteries reduce the amount of potentially harmful materials thrown away, and can save money in the long run.
- Bring **reusable bags** when buying presents or when food shopping. For small or oversized purchases, don't use a bag.
- Give gifts in gift bags so the recipient can reuse the bag.
- Instead of buying wrapping paper, make your own by reusing magazines, old maps, or other paper products you don't use anymore. If you choose to buy wrapping paper, look for brands made from recycled paper.



- **Reuse bows, ribbons, and gift-wrap** as much as possible.
- Purchase greeting cards made from recycled materials. If possible, send greeting cards by email. If you have children, give them the project to make cards for family members.
- **Reuse packaging, like boxes and bubble wrap**, if you need to mail gifts. Recycle any boxes and cardboard you can't use anymore.



Entertaining:

- When hosting meals, **ditch the paper and plastic plates and cups**. Using reusable plates, napkins, and tablecloths will not only reduce waste, but will also save you money in the long run.

Traveling:

- If you're traveling over the holidays, make sure you turn off all lights that aren't on security timers. Unplug unused appliances, cable boxes, computers, etc. when you leave home. Lower your thermostat to save energy and money.

Resources used:

- http://www.ehow.com/how_2121687_green-holidays.html <http://www.hcdoes.org/gogreen/calendar.htm>
- http://greenliving.suite101.com/article.cfm/going_green_for_the_holidays__3_
- <http://www.sustainlane.com/reviews/tips-on-going-green-for-the-holidays/D4H9NWL932YBC8QU2YYBR2LWV9JZ>
- http://www.ehow.com/how_4672715_choose-ecofriendly-christmas-tree.html
- <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Artificial+Christmas+trees:+how+real+are+the+lead+exposure+risks%3F-a0126076381>
- <http://www.epa.gov/waste/wycd/funfacts/winter.htm>